critical digest

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New York Theatre Diary

Carousel-scheduled to close August 29-City Center...Almanac-to re-open August 23 at Imperial...Fifth Season to re-open Sept .5 at Cort..Midsummer Night's Dream -Metropolitan Opera 9/21...Old Vic production with Moira Shearer, Robert Helpmann... All Summer Long- Coronet 9/23/54. Robert Anderson's play with June Walker, John Kerr ...The Boy Friend-Royale 9/30/54.English musical with Julie Andrews.

Strawhat Tryouts

A Burst of Summer, A.B. Shiffrin's comedy which debuted at Bucks County, Pa, Playhouse, won mild notices from two NYC drama critics. Coleman, Mirror, found all the ingredients for a funny comedy, but noted that script needed a smoother blending. Dash, Women's Wear, enjoyed the flow of smooth, facile dialogue. If the author seriously hopes to have show land on Broadway, critic offers five suggestions for improvement of script. These include adding a few more dramatic and comedy twists to plot, avoid having all of the vocal characters speaks as if they were the famed wits of the Algonquin Round Table, and preparing for the violent switch in character of his lead.

Dear Charles, the Alan Melville play starring Tallulah Bankhead, opened its summer circuit pre Broadway run at Cape Playhouse, Dennis, Mass. Variety mugg listed it as a one joke trifle in which the star has a virual field day. As it stands it is amusing summer fare, but Diaz, Variety, wonders if it might not be too fragile for Broadway in winter. NBC Leah Pearson agreed script was a trifle,, but it suits the star perfectly.

The Brothers, a new comedy-drama by John Rodell tried out at Margo Jones Theatre '54, Dallas, is a good, tightly written script that entertains and holds interest throughout, okays Bark, Variety....Pal Joey, with Collette Lyons as Gladys Bump, won rave notice from Coleman, Mirror, who caught package at Norwich, Conn, Summer Theatre. ...Count Me In, new revue by John Havens and Andre Arceneaux was panned on basis of first try at Hampton Star Playhouse, Westhampton, NY, by Hank, Variety.

Far-Flung Critics

The Dark is Light Enough, Christopher Fry's new play in London , hasn't changed Watts, Post, opinion of the English poet-play right. He still is oddly disappointed in the dramatic structure that accompanies Fry's poetic imagination. Fry continues, Watts feels, to be intoxicated by the sound of his own words. NY critic finds himself calling new play "The Light is Dark Enough."...Oedipus Rex, the third production of Stratford, Ontario, Shakespearean Festival, was highly rated by Whittaker, Toronto Globe, who filed a notice in the NY Times. Sophocles play is the most impresive offering of the second season Tyrone Guthrie's production fuses the ancient forms of Greek theatre into stunning new abstractions. Eleanor Stuart was billed as the outstanding performer. James Mason, critic noted, played with moments of deep emotional feeling, but on the whole his performance is scaled down below that of the heroic figures he achieves physically.

Off Broadway

Salvation on a String, the 3 Paul Green playlets presented at Theatre de Lys closed after 8 performances...Tickets for The Cretan Woman are on sale through August 1...Cherry Lane Theatre box-office robbed of $285 during performance of Murder in 3 Keys...Lord Crofts Troupe Revellers are presenting an evening of Afro-West Indian songs and dances at Royal Playhouse,33 East 4 for a month starting July 26...$3 top will be charged for A Stone for Danny Fisher opening Oct 27 at Downtown National.

Phoenix Theatre and Rachel Productions ,which presented World of Sholem Aleichem , combine next season to offer Earl Robinson and Waldo Salt's musical Sandhog. Based on Dreiser story "Saint Columbia and the River", Howard De Silva will direct. It will be presented as the second production at the Phoenix next season with Nov 25 as the tentative opening date.

Green Room Studio production of Henri Becque's comedy La Parisienne continues Fri,Sat,Sun through Aug 8.

The Chair, Tom Hill and Don Stuart new play at their Originals Only, was rated by Herridge,Post, as not a good play, but certainly not a dull play. Those who enjoy a good fight can do worse than visit this semi professional production. Newly raised stage makes viewing more comfortable, drama editor noted.

Major Barbara production at Greenwich Mews Theatre is only sporadically Shavian, reports Geor,Variety. Karen Morley as Barbara is production's major virtue. Director Paul Vincent Gordon has not fused many separate efforts into a unified piece of theatre, nor has he been able to inform the production with consistent style,panned trade paper mugg.

Vaudeville

"Dutch Treat" revue at Radio City Music Hall features Nanci Crompton and Marily Murphy...Alan Carney headlines at Palace this week.

Theatre Book Notes

Christopher Fry's "The Dark is Light Enough" published by Oxford..."The King of Hearts" has been published by Doubleday..."Teahouse of August Moon" has been published by Putnam.

Theatre TV &Ratio . Notes

Incidental music to Teahouse of August Moon by Dai-Keong Lee will be played by NBC Symphony on July 25-Radio...Julie Haydon and Zachary Scott are featured in Elmer Rice's The Grand Tour on Aug 17 ABC TV US Steel...Dorothy McGuire will be starred in "To Each His Own" on NBC-TV Aug 26...Jack Buchanan and Jeanmaire have been signed to appear on NBC TV "spectaculars" produced by Max Leibman. ...Celeste Holm will be featured in a situation comedy series "Honestly, Celeste" on CBS TV Sun 9 30 PM...Du Mont TV has option on Fredric March for hour long filmed series...SEE "PLAYGOER'S GUIDE" FOR "THEATRE ON TV THIS WEEK" LISTINGS.

Theatre Record Comments

"Three Penny Opera" MGM album shows that the macabre gaiety and raucous brazeness of Weill's music still evokes response,approves Kap Carberg, Herald Tribune. Impact of work is sharped by Blitzstein's masterly English adaption,which is tailor made to the score and gives it a contemporary stamp.

"Arabian Nights" album-Decca- is released in two versions. One with original cast, the other with just dance music. Billboard reviewers predict that latter will have more sales appeal, for with the exception of "A Thousand and One Nights" they thought none of the tunes outstanding. Variety mugg thought show was excellently packaged by Decca.

Green Room Department

MUSIC CRITICS VIEWS...Though it may have seemed unnatural for a music critic to enjoy the completely musical The Golden [illegible], Johnson, Post, admits she had more consistent fun at Can-Can. One [illegible] is the complete naturalness of the normal Broadway musical which encourages a composer to set a text with such ease that the singers give the illusion of speaking rather than formally singing...Compared to several years ago the average Broadway musical is much more solid job of music and dance, notes Biancolli, World Telegram-Sun. Some of the country's finest dance and music talent has been attracted to Broadway in the last decade, while the shows are often in the directorial hands of men firmly grounded in the classical repertory.

COLUMN TIPS...Libby Holman will do a one woman show on Broadway, reports Walker... A Broadway manager slugs one of his top female clients hard and often, whispers Farrell...Hellinger Theatre may pass into hands of Rodgers and Hammerstein, guesses Watt, News.

DANGEROUS THURBER...The Male Animal co-author James Thurber confesses in Herald Tribune piece that the message of his play was that freedom of thought is a good idea and should be perserved. The "Playgoer" drama critic of South Coast News, Laguna Beach, Calif, filed a con notice claiming the play holds sincere Americanism up to ridicule.

TALENT TIPS...Any show that has an Arthur Schwartz score, a star performer like Shirley Booth, and a roly-poly comedy singer of Mae Barnes' attainments is worth anybody's time. By the Beautiful Sea has all three points out, Watt, News...Peggy and her understudy, the dogs in King of Hearts, earn $175 per week, discovered Morehouse, WT & S...Why not get Humphrey Bogart to play lead in The Desperate Hours play as well as in the film version, suggests Chapman, News.

TICKET PROBLEMS...Why is theatre ticket information unavaiable to the tourist? Why must a theatregoer call a dozen different theatres? Why is it you must wait 5 to 10 minutes before a phone in a box office is answered? These are some of the questions Sylvia Siegler, Show Shop, asks Sylvester, News. She has tried to organize a central theatre ticket information service, but the ticket brokers are against her.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Don Walker, one of Broadway musical shows top arrangers, started his career arranging fora small orchestra that played in a Chinese restaurant in Philadelphia, Coleman, Mirror, Learned. His first big job was as arranger via mail for Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians. At present he is busy on re-arranging the music for the On Your Toes revival. Orchestrators have to hit a happy medium today, he concluded, between the music and the dance elements of the show.

Pros & Cons by TMK

Off Broadway theatre has matured from the actors standpoint. The increase in salary, the percentage of a production success and admittance to senior membership are important milestones for the actor involved in Off Broadway productions. It is now up to the Off Broadway producer to mature. The purpose of presenting plays off Broadway that could not for diverse reasons be presented on Broadway must always be kept in mind. The number of producers interested in off Broadway only to make a profit at the expense of lowered salaries and costs must be kept to the minimum. Equity can control this situation by the wise handling of requests for off Broadway contracts.

The importance of the Off Broadway theatre to the actor is emphasized with the new rule recently adopted by Actors Equity. Appearances by members in Off Broadway productions will now count as credit toward senior membership. To become a senior member a total of twenty four working weeks in at least two shows must be made within a two year period. Rule applies to those theatres working with an Equity Off Broadway contract where 70% of cast are Equity members. This new rule together with the recent increase in rates makes the Off Broadway movement important to actors.

Plays

The Golden Apple is scheduled to close August 7...Carousel will continue at NY City Center through Aug 29,with NY City Center Ballet Season opening Aug 31...Christopher Fry's The Dark is Light Enough will be produced by Katharine Cornell and Roger Stevens in Oct...All Summer Long enters rehearsals Aug 11...Teahouse of August Moon extras won week vacations and $100 bonus checks...Festival, a new comedy by Sam and Bella Spewack,is scheduled to open Nov 10.

People

Carol Haney, The Pajama Game,will not be available to make the announced MGM film "Robin Hood" until Jan 1...Tom Ewell, Seven Year Itch,goes on vacation Aug 24-Oct 4, Elliott Nugent may sub...Gregory Ratoff will direct A.B. Shiffrin's Black-Eyed Susan...Julie Harris will star in Kermit Bloomgarden's production of Anouilh's The Lark,a play about St. Joan.

Summer Playhouses

Home is the Hero, which Theatre Guild will present at Booth on Sept 22, will debut Aug 20 at Westport,Conn,Country Playhouse...Jones Beach Arabian Nights sold out nightly during recent warm spell...Roddy McDowall, Ethel Smith and Jerome Cowan are featured in Aboard the Bandwagon revue at Bucks County,Pa,Playhouse revue.

Other Broadways

Actors Equity is planning to undertake a campaign to organize the Canadian legitimate theatre with cooperation of Canadian Council of Authors and Artists. A branch office will be set up in Toronto...Round Up Theatre, a Negro amateur group, gave the first performance of William Saroyan's A Lost Child's Fireflies in Dallas...Tenthouse Tothouse in Chicago will present Friday matinees this summer of children's plays.

Theatre Film Notes

Ethel Barrymore will be starred in "Young at Heart"film...Katharine Hepburn is starred in "Summertime" film being made in Venice,which is based on Time of Cuckoo Edgar and Arch Selwyn,NY theatre producers 1910-1930,will be subject of non musical film produced by latter's son, William.

CRITICAL DIGEST
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